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MAKING THE CAMPS SAFE FOR THE ARMY

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"I am determined that our new training camps, as well as the surrounding zones within an effective radius, shall not be places of temptation and peril."

Into these words, written six weeks after America's entry into the world conflict, the Secretary of War condensed a policy not only strikingly new in American preparations, but also in the military history of the world. They were included in a letter written on May 26 to the governors of all the states. Essentially they only gave expression to the conviction which had been previously incorporated in the legislation known as sections 12 and 13 of the Selective Draft Act. The sentence gave notice to the nation and the world that the new American Army, so far as the efforts of the War Department could be made effective, was to be in every sense morally fit for the high cause in which the United States had just enlisted. Secretary Baker further had expressed the policy in these words:

Our responsibility in this matter is not open to question. We can not allow these young men, most of whom will have been drafted to service, to be surrounded by a vicious and demoralizing environment, nor can we leave anything undone which will protect them from unhealthy influences and crude forms of temptation. Not only have we an inescapable responsibility in this matter to the families and communities from which these young men are selected, but, from the standpoint of our duty and our determination to create an efficient army, we are bound, as a military necessity, to do everything in our power to promote the health and conserve the vitality of the men in the training camps.

The policy had not been chosen at random in the first place: as with so many other factors involved in our entry into the war, we had the benefit and the experience of our Allies and of our foes as well. Publicity has been given to the bitter lesson of one of the allied armies, which, during the first eighteen months of the war, saw more of its men out of action through the ravages of venereal disease than from all other physical causes combined. A Vienna specialist has estimated that at one time and another an equivalent of sixty Austrian divisions have been on the non-effective list for

the same reason. In addition to these and many similar facts, the War Department was in possession of data gathered as a result of our own mobilization on the Mexican border in 1916. At that time each division commander had been a law to himself in the matter of the vice and liquor problems, and their policies had ranged from extreme liberality to strictest repression. The results of a comparative investigation gave unmistakable proof that the latter method insured not only the healthiest but the most effective troops. Above all were those high moral considerations, which are so tersely spoken in the Secretary's words quoted above, and which fitted so pertinently the course of an administration always hewing close to the line of practical ideals.

Into the care and keeping of the War Department Commission on Training Camp Activities, itself symbolic of the broad ideal upon which this policy was based, was entrusted the responsibility for making the wishes of the administration a reality. During the spring and summer of 1917, a small group of men specially trained in the social hygiene movement were operating in the field under the direct supervision of Mr. Raymond B. Fosdick, chairman of the commission, whose own experience with this problem had made him a peculiarly effective choice for the leadership of the commission. As the scope of the mobilization increased with the fall weeks, it was seen early in October that the work must be specially organized and enlarged. Thus was evolved the organization of the Law Enforcement Division. The appointment as its director of Bascom Johnson, who had been counsel for the American Social Hygiene Association, and who scored notable successes against commercialized vice in California, and more particularly in the wiping out of the notorious "Barbary Coast" of San Francisco, was a particularly happy and efficient one. It guaranteed a practical and yet sympathetic handling of the new policy, as yet only dimly realized by the army and scarcely at all by the public at large.

In the Surgeon General's Office, the appointment of Major William F. Snow, M. R. C., also an officer of the American Social Hygiene Association, being at that time its executive secretary, to be in charge of the Section on Combating Venereal Diseases, had laid the ground work for extensive army coöperation. Through his efforts, a group of lieutenants in the Sanitary Corps were commissioned and sent out into the field in the vicinity of thirty-two can-

tonments. Under the direction of Major Johnson, they began a systematic and fruitful campaign; first, to secure the stimulation of law enforcement against both prostitution and the illegal liquor traffic, and, second, to study the medical aspects of the problems so far as the army was involved.

To this end they worked with every possible agency and utilized every available weapon, federal, state, county, municipal and military. They acted primarily neither as vice investigators nor as prosecuting assistants, though able to assume either function temporarily should the occasion require, but devoted their energy to securing results through designated officials, and to keeping the War Department informed of the conditions prevailing in their territory. Moreover, they acted as especially effective evangelists for the new gospel of civic decency and military efficiency involved in the policy which they were sent out to execute. So effectively have they operated that, at the present time in more than two hundred cities of the United States, the officials are actively coöperating in the most drastic methods of vice suppression, and, in many instances, in methods which were directly contrary not only to the long established habit of the community but to the private convictions of the citizens themselves. Such is the power of patriotism wedded to the ideal of a great cause.

THE DRIVE ON ALCOHOL

I wish to discuss first the lesser of the two evils, prostitution and alcoholism, so far as the military viewpoint is concerned. The liquor problem had been considered in the enactment of the now famous Section 12 already referred to. After several subsequent revisions, each of which only drew the regulations more tightly, the act provides essentially the following: A dry zone of five miles around every military camp, where two hundred and fifty or more men are being trained for a period of thirty days or longer, except that within the limits of incorporated cities and towns, the zone is made one-half mile, and further that it shall be an offence not merely to sell, but to give liquor to members of the military forces within the United States or its possessions, even in private homes.

In this way, the civilian offender or agent was taken care of. Within the military régime, the soldier who was found under the influence or in the possession of liquor was subject to the usual dis-

cipline of the army, and, in addition, it was later provided that if he were a party, even as purchaser, to transactions which Section 12 sought to prevent, he was also liable to court-martial. With the pressure thus made heavy, both from within and without, the crusade to protect the new army from the effects of alcoholism progressed. So far as it is a health problem, the sentiment against liquor has for a long time been more or less pronounced in the army. Medical officers, whose opinions and attitude on prostitution may have been somewhat antiquated, were quite definitely opposed to the effects of an evil, which, in their minds, rendered the subject not only less fit for military duty, but even more definitely exposed to the ravages of venereal disease.

The representatives of the Law Enforcement Division, however, did not stop merely with the use of Section 12 and its enforcement through the Department of Justice. They invoked every local reinforcement which existed on the statute books against illegal liquor selling, in some instances providing penalties even more severe than the federal act, and, if necessary, sought to add still more effective legislation, both state and municipal. In this sense, the prohibitive effort has had no more powerful ally than patriotism and the appeal to "protect the boys in the service."

A few concrete illustrations will show the lengths to which some communities have gone to make good their assurances in this regard and to place the welfare of the army above the immediate desires or interests of the citizens. In Texas, for example, a special legislative session placed around every camp an absolutely dry zone of ten miles with no exceptions for cities and towns. When it is realized that this involved the welfare of over a quarter million troops and over forty military points, it will be seen that the later passage of the state-wide prohibition act was almost reduced to a generous superfluity. Louisiana followed the same example with a twenty-five mile zone around its single cantonment at Camp Beauregard. In addition to state-wide actions of this sort, there have been many effective local methods of defeating the "boot-legger." In some cities the liquor dealers, either by voluntary agreement or by municipal ordinance, have forbidden the sale of any liquor in packages to be consumed off the premises. Hotels have voluntarily suppressed the sale of alcoholic beverages above the main floor. In the best cafés liquors are not served at tables where members of the military

forces are seated, even though they may be accompanied by civilians. And all over the country the life of the "boot-legger,"—that surreptitious outlaw of the alley and dark corner, who has been naturally the chief source of supply,—has been made miserable under the combined assault of all sets of authorities, federal, state, local and military.

So the unrelenting crusade has gone on. It has not achieved the impossible, but it has scored an undeniable success. Statistically and otherwise it has demonstrated that prohibition can prohibit, if applied continuously, and without fear or favor. In some of the largest commands, the arrests for drunkenness have been reduced almost to the vanishing point; in short, the results upon the whole have justified the following comment by an editorial writer in the *Military Surgeon*:

If this war has proved anything, it is that prohibition in the hands of military authorities can be, and has been, enforced. Since the civil authorities realized that the Army proposed to carry out the extra cantonment zone law against liquor and corruption, alcoholism and its results have practically ceased to be a depressing factor in army health and army discipline. A drunken soldier is rarely seen, and alcoholism assumes a steadily dwindling importance in medical statistics.¹

THE ANCIENT AND UNNECESSARY EVIL

Coming now to the main point of attack, prostitution and the evils of commercialized vice, we face a much more difficult and much

¹ Even more illuminating is this comment quoted from a report of the Judge Advocate General of the Army, making an analysis of recent courts-martial:

"A comparison of the part that drunkenness played in the criminal statistics of the Army during the first three months of this year as compared with the first three months of the war in 1917 shows a decrease in the number of crimes involving drunkenness. During the first three months of the war 5.31 per cent of the men who were tried by general court-martial were tried for offenses involving drunkenness, and during the first three months of this current year this percentage dropped to 2.71. In other words, proportionately only about one-half as many men are now being tried for offenses involving drunkenness as were tried for similar offenses a year ago."

The local viewpoint on this crusade may be deduced from the following excerpt from *The Post* of Houston, Texas, a city where the conditions in February last were such as to be largely in mind when the War Department applied to the Governor of Texas for remedial action:

"Is it really dry in Houston?" asks the inquisitive subscriber of Wharton. "Dry? Say, it is so dry that when a Houston man gets out of his bath, instead of using towels to dry himself he merely dusts himself with a whisk broom."

more universal problem. The foes, attacked by the War Department policy which I am discussing, are analogous to the two main enemies across the sea. Alcoholism and prostitution stand somewhat in the relation to each other of Austria and Germany, both powerful and dangerous, but the one far less capable of prolonged resistance than the other. With the liquor traffic practically out of the way, as in some southern states where prohibition was in effect even before the war, prostitution had entrenched itself behind strong barriers of custom, prejudice, politics and illicit gain. Moreover, lust for women is a much more universal and more intense appetite than the craving for alcohol, and while the latter is undoubtedly a stimulation both individually and commercially to prostitution, its removal in no wise defeats, though it may weaken, the forces of commercialized vice. Some of the most difficult situations with which we have had to contend in the latter respect have been in the "dry" community where vice defences have been built up over a long period of general patronage.

When the battle line on this front is surveyed after a year's conflict, the results are little short of amazing. In brief, during the past twelve months and more, parts of the United States have undergone what is tantamount to a social revolution in this respect. Old things have passed away, giving place to new. And as regards the vile business itself, prostitution has steadily undergone such rapid changes that constant readjustment in the lines of attack is necessary to meet the new conditions presented by those foes of military efficiency and public welfare, the prostitute, the pimp and the procurer.

When the department launched its forces against the problem last year, prostitution, particularly in the area where the majority of the troops were mobilized, was definitely established on three main lines—the segregated, or so-called red light, district; the scattered house of ill-fame in its various forms of parlor houses, call-in flats, assignation houses and the like, and the street-walking or clandestine woman.

The first line of defence, as it may be called, namely, the red light districts, was carried with a rush under the operation of Section 13 of the Selective Service Act, a companion weapon to Section 12. This legislation authorizes the Secretary of War to prohibit not only all such areas publicly or tacitly set aside for prostitution, but all

scattered resorts within an absolute ten mile zone of every military establishment. At the time of this writing, the first of August, ninety-one red light districts alone have been wiped out of existence through representatives of the Law Enforcement Division acting in coöperation with the Department of Justice. It should be added, however, that a large proportion of these have been abolished simply by local action after the request or pressure had come from representatives of the War Department. Some have been located nearly one hundred miles from a military camp and have been suppressed in response to the argument that the community was a point in transit for troops, and that its existence imperiled not merely their welfare but the health of the young men not yet summoned to the new National Army. Even that Gibraltar of commercialized vice, notorious not only on this continent but abroad, the New Orleans district, which comprised twenty-four solid blocks given over to human degradation and lust and housing six to eight hundred women, has gone down with the rest.

As a result of these successes it may be stated that there is not now in the United States a red light district within the effective radius of any military establishment. More than that, the district itself has become an anachronism in American life, and the so-called segregation policy has been to all intents and purposes laid away in its burial shroud. Such is the victory of moral and military efficiency over the most brazen expression and dangerous form of commercialized vice.

The assault on prostitution's second line of defence has been almost as successful. Of course no such sweeping statement can be made in regard to the scattered resorts as applies to the red light districts, but in the camp communities, at least, their operation has become so dangerous and unprofitable an enterprise that it has been well-nigh abandoned in the retreat toward the third and most easily defended entrenchments.

The single clandestine prostitute, moving secretly from city to city and even changing her residence with significant frequency in each city, is now the main source of infection. Hotel appointments, made through the agency of porters and bell-boys, and automobile excursions into the countryside with the chauffeur acting as go-between, now represent the bulk of her business. It is to outwit these unscrupulous partners that the later methods of fighting commer-

cialized vice have been generally devised. Ordinances and statutes providing the severest penalties especially for those who act as procurers and go-betweens, and the use of both military and civil police with motorcycles and automobiles have increasingly served, though they cannot suppress the traffic entirely, to keep it at a significant minimum. The owners and keepers of hotels and rooming houses, who permit their premises to be used for assignation purposes, have been reached through the use of the now widely enacted injunction and abatement laws, and through special ordinances directed at the licensing of these establishments. In other words, the heavy hand of civil and military law has been felt not simply by the wandering delinquent, who sells her body for hire, but by all those who seek to profit from her wretched and difficult gain. In no respect, perhaps, has the suppression policy more strikingly vindicated itself than in its successful and repeated assaults against the secret salients of the clandestine scarlet woman.

RECONSTRUCTION AS WELL AS DESTRUCTION

So far I have described the purely destructive aspects of our warfare against vice and alcoholism. Out of its victories have come, however, the more attractive and more constructive services which are described in other pages. In the spring of this year, the work of the then-called Law Enforcement Division was entrusted to a subdivision under the name of the Section on Vice and Liquor Control, to which were added the Section on Women and Girls and the Section on Reformatories and Detention Houses, all three united to form the new and enlarged Law Enforcement Division, under the general direction of Major Bascom Johnson. Together they have moved forward to present a united and coherent front, which provides not merely for the drastic suppression of the offence, but the humane and sympathetic up-building of the offender.

In this work the Law Enforcement Division has had the invaluable support of the Surgeon General's Office and the Public Health Service, and all have moved on together toward the partial solution, at least, of a problem which men for centuries have either been so content, indifferent, or eager as to term insoluble. We hear very seldom now the old familiar phrases of "the necessary evil," or "changing human nature," or "turning back the history of six thousand years." In short, numbers of these same contented or

indifferent citizens have come to understand that this great plague was evil, but not necessary; that humanity and not nature must be changed; and that in this regard, at least, the history of six thousand years is a long roll of error from which we now turn away to better things.

In offering a statement of this kind, it is only fair to respond to the natural demand for results which is dear to every Yankee heart. As evidence of our victories the venereal rate decreased 50 per cent for the American Army, and is the lowest known in the military history of the world. We can provide from the prophylactic statistics even more striking evidence of 50 per cent decrease in the exposures to infection within a month after law enforcement measures have been instituted in such widely separated and socially different communities as San Francisco, California; Des Moines, Iowa; Jacksonville, Florida. We offer further the even more convincing testimony,—an army that, generally speaking, goes forth to battle conscious of its own cleanliness and decency.

What I have written is only a small chapter in the by-products which have come out of the terrible and yet magnificent production of a nation equipping itself for war. Yet if we had done nothing more than to send across the seas to the aid of our Allies the cleanest army the world has ever seen, a host of fighting men who have been trained in an atmosphere true to the highest ideals of American life, we have proved ourselves fit to fight for the preservation of democracy. For if democracy has not made a man respect his own body, mind and soul, and that of his countrymen, be they man or woman, it has failed. And if it has instilled even the first seeds of this physical and spiritual self-respect, it has succeeded according to its truest tests.